

02/04/04 - Superfund

***Redevelopment of the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Site  
Tacoma, Washington***

The Port of Tacoma in Washington serves as a gateway to the Pacific and the commercial markets that lie beyond. Goods from all over the world are stored and distributed from the Port, which is served by industrial and commercial shipping channels within Commencement Bay. Over the years, a variety of industrial activities were conducted in the area, leaving behind a legacy of pollution that impacted 12 square miles in the Commencement Bay area. Particularly affected by this pollution were the bottom sediments in the waterways of the Tideflats industrial area and the shoreline in the Nearshore area. A creative cleanup solution for this area, however, gave Tacoma businesses a competitive advantage by providing port access for larger ships and increasing container storage space. Today, the Port of Tacoma is the seventh largest container port in the nation.



The Commencement Bay site includes more than 300 active businesses and nearly 500 identified sources of contamination. Pollutants – including heavy metals and arsenic – found their way into the Bay’s sediments, including those of the Sitcum and Milwaukee Waterways. A total of 430,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments were dredged from the Sitcum Waterway and used as fill in the Milwaukee Waterway. After capping, 23 new acres were available for reuse, and 9 acres of wetlands were also restored.

The remedy proved to have a significant impact on both the environment and the local economy. In addition to restoring aquatic habitat, the depth of the Sitcum Waterway was increased to accommodate larger ships, and the newly available land on the Milwaukee Waterway enabled an existing Sea-Land marine terminal facility to expand, increasing the size of the facility to 107 acres. In 1996, Sea-Land and Maersk formed an alliance to share ships and facilities, combining their adjacent terminals into one 132-acre facility. The efficiencies of this alliance include greater returns for both companies and the Port. According to a spokesman for Sea-Land, “We wanted to see if we couldn’t share assets and provide more frequent service without making huge investments.” The creative combination of redevelopment plans with site cleanup made this possible.

**Positive Economic and Fiscal Impacts**

- Sea-Land Terminal now handles 34% more cargo and requires additional longshoremen hours
- Approximately \$5,000,000 in income from additional longshoremen hours in 2003
- Almost \$29,000,000 in increased property values on the site between 1993 and 2002
- Over \$210,000,000 in increased property values within a half mile of the site from 1993 to 2002
- Approximately \$3,000,000 in increased property tax revenue for Pierce County in 2002

**Environmental and Social Benefits**

- Protected human health and the environment by addressing contaminated sediments
- Increased the port’s capacity for container storage and larger sea vessels
- Restored valuable wetland habitat